

Building a big stick

Visiting artist creates larger-than-life sculpture for Duxbury

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Matthew Dehaemers spent four weeks in Duxbury as an artist in residence at the Art Complex Museum. His objective was to learn about the town and create a piece representing his view of what made Duxbury tick. After weeks of walking around and inhaling the atmosphere he began creating a larger-than-life lacrosse stick depicting the origin of lacrosse and the spirit of Duxbury today.

Although he had done his research on the town and the sport, it was not until he was well into his project that he learned of the Duxbury High School girls and boys' lacrosse teams winning the state championships. Dehaemers said his idea came from the visibility of the sport being played as he walked through town, as well the origin of the lacrosse from the American Indians. The large wooden lacrosse stick is made from pieces of natural wood, representing the American Indians, and finished wood representing the modern game.

"I decided to do a piece that is

relevant to the game of lacrosse and how it stands as a metaphor in the relationship between the white settlers and the American Indians," Dehaemers said. "The metaphor was the concept behind the physical point of the piece. It is beautiful and natural, and tied into the games maturity."

The handle of the stick is made from fallen tree branches and the trunk of a dead red oak tree. The head is made of white pine that was milled and bought from a local lumberyard. Dehaemers manipulated the wood to shape the basket with anticipation of using natural hemp rope to create the netting. The finished lacrosse stick, once all the pieces are attached, extends between 20 to 25 feet in length.

Once he had the idea of his project formulated, Dehaemers spent a week doing research on the game and the Indians of this area. His first step was to create a small-scale model. In the model he created other depictions that represented Duxbury such a ship, representing the town's relation with the water. However, after creating the project he felt it stood alone without the additional pieces. And it was just happenstance that the basket of the stick resembles the bow of a ship.

"To manipulate the wood I had a conversation with the wood to

see how far it would bend," Dehaemers said. "I had conversations with the material throughout and felt my way through the to make the project."

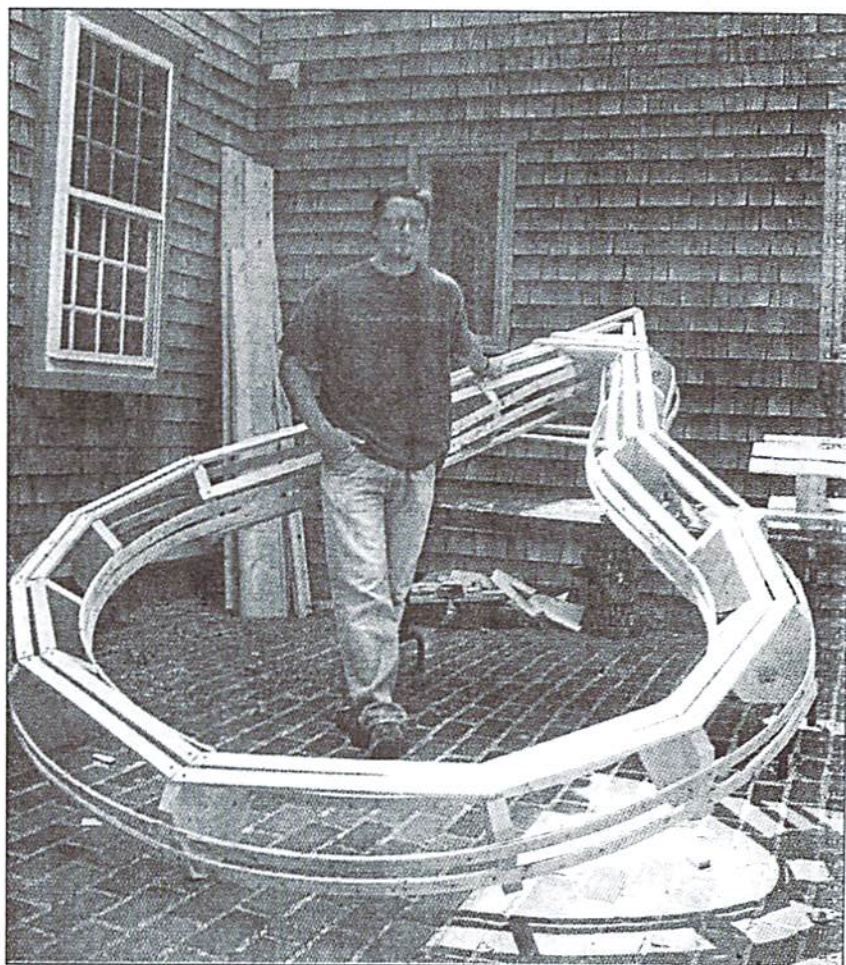
Dehaemers has a master of fine arts degree from the University of Wisconsin in sculpture and installation, as well as a bachelor of fine arts degree in printmaking and painting from Creighton University in Omaha, Neb. He also studied art history in Rome.

One of the most time-consuming parts of his project was gathering the materials he said. If the wood were too stiff it would not bend, the greener the wood, the more elasticity for shape, he explained.

Dehaemers, originally from Kansas City, Kan., has participated in several resident artist programs. He said he enjoys going to different places and learning about their towns and cultures. He has always been a large-scale artist; these opportunities allow him to create lasting pieces for the towns representing who they are.

"Every project is different from one to the next, I find material that fits the concept and then find material to go with the concept."

Dehaemers' enormous lacrosse stick is on display at the Art Complex Museum outside near the tea hut.



Matthew Dehaemers, resident artist at the Art Complex Museum, stands inside his larger than life lacrosse stick.

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